

# **Urban and Metropolitan Universities in Tomorrow's Economy: An Overview of the 11th Annual International CUMU Conference**

James E. Lyons, Sr. and Gary R. Levine

It was a pleasure and an honor for California State University, Dominguez Hills to host the 11th Annual Conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities in Southern California in October 2005. Two hundred fifty faculty and administrative colleagues from more than 50 institutions and community organizations came together to spend three days exploring how momentous changes in the economy will likely affect higher education, and how urban and metropolitan universities can succeed in transforming the challenges of the new economy into opportunities for realizing and enhancing their missions and accomplishments.

## **The Conference Program**

The conference program included eight prominent plenary speakers, a panel of local elected government officials, a Shakespeare play presented California-style, and nearly 60 concurrent session presentations by conference participants. Within the framework provided by the conference theme, speakers and presenters focused on the areas of relationships between the public schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions; civic engagement, civic partnerships, and service learning; institutional mission, academic programs, and student services; and resource development. Over the course of the conference, in addition to attending and presenting the concurrent sessions, participants listened to and interacted with a range of distinguished plenary session speakers who helped to frame the discussions. In these sessions:

- *Dennis Jones*, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, explored the role of state policies in fostering the ability of colleges and universities to meet their challenges. His paper appears in this journal issue.
- A panel of local elected officials (*Mike Lansing*, Board Member, Los Angeles Unified School District; *Jenny Oropeza*, Member of the California Assembly; and *Bill Rosendahl*, Member, Los Angeles City Council) shared their views on the needs of local communities for an educated workforce in tomorrow's economy.

- *John Eger*, Van Deerlin Endowed Chair of Communications and Public Policy at San Diego State University, and a pioneer of the “Smart Communities” movement, discussed how technology and globalization are affecting the ways in which universities educate tomorrow’s workforce. His paper, “Smart Communities, Universities, and Globalization: Educating the Workforce for Tomorrow’s Economy,” appears in this journal issue.
- *Jack Kyser*, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, provided special insights into the challenges posed by the rapid economic expansion of the Pacific Rim.
- *Yolanda T. Moses*, former president of the American Association of Higher Education, and *Antonio Flores*, President of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, jointly looked at the preparation and composition of the faculty who will be recruited and the diversity of the student bodies that urban and metropolitan universities will serve in the new economy.
- *Charles Reed*, Chancellor of the California State University; *Mark Drummond*, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges; and *Roy Romer*, Superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District explored the relationships between three different systems of education in California and how their different collaborations contribute to the attainments and retention of students at all levels.

CUMU President, *James C. Votruba*, President of Western Kentucky University, delivered the first Coalition Presidential Address, “Advancing American Universities’ Promise: The Stewardship of Place.” His talk connected the conference theme to the need for positive acceptance and recognition by urban and metropolitan universities of their responsibilities for their substantive contributions to their communities. He viewed this as a key to the future of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities. As the world becomes more technologically interdependent and the concept of community comes to be redefined, urban and metropolitan universities will play a leading role in making local communities stronger and better places in which to live and work. The institutions in the coalition, he stressed, must place more emphasis on becoming responsible in their own missions and programs for the conditions of the communities in which they exist.

A special feature of the conference, one that highlighted California’s multi-cultural history and contemporary environment, was a Sunday evening presentation of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*, adapted by the East Los Angeles Classic Theater to the era of the California missions, and produced in mariachi style with original musical compositions and choreography. The performance was introduced by *Tony Plana*, actor, educator, and Creative Director of the ELA Classic troupe, who spoke on the use of theater as an outreach and retention tool for youth in urban schools and contributions of higher education to the careers of minorities in the entertainment industry. Following the performance, the actors and crew dined informally with the conference participants in the Stadium Club at the Home Depot Center, the professional sports and training facility located on the CSU, Dominguez Hills campus.

## The Key Issues

The theme of the 11th Annual International CUMU Conference was, “Urban and Metropolitan Universities and the Economy of Tomorrow.” At a time when there are significant structural economic changes taking place regionally, nationally, and internationally that are resulting in major shifts and dislocations, developing a sense of what the economy of tomorrow might be expected to look like is not an easy task. The overarching problem in the view of many is that the pace at which technology and globalization are changing the economic picture is without precedent in both human and organizational experience. If it ever was possible to do so, the future cannot now be predicted merely by undertaking a straight line extrapolation of current trends and projecting them to continue to some predetermined point. Achieving insight into and appreciation of the conference theme, then, turned out to be a more elusive process than the planners had anticipated it would be. Many differing views were expressed, and that is in and of itself a reflection of the uncertainty that surrounds the process of making choices about how universities should plan for their development and growth strategies for success in the economy of tomorrow.

To many, it turned out that the very pace of economic change, along with the growing recognition that physical security of place is no longer an assured feature of our individual and civic lives — a major theme of the 2004 CUMU Conference — created a direction from which emerged clarity of understanding that predominated surprisingly throughout the conference discussions and presentations. Understanding and creating communities on- and off-campus became a major thrust of the conference. Speakers in the plenary sessions and presenters in the concurrent sessions asked repeatedly, how do we engage our students with learning that helps them to face the challenges of the digitized and globalized economic environment? How are technology and globalization affecting the economy, and what effect will they have on the role of urban and metropolitan universities? How do we engage our campus and surrounding communities in the quest to secure and sustain an economic base that ensures that we will be able to continue to meet our missions? How can our academic programs, student services, and civic engagement practices contribute to creating and sustaining a meaningful place in our communities?

As higher education professionals seeking answers to these questions, the conference participants looked at the multiplicity of players, public and private, and how their interactions with higher education influence the answers to such questions. The selected conference papers that follow in this edition of *The Journal of Metropolitan Universities* provide an indication of the thoughtful manner in which conference participants addressed these and related issues.

Exploring the community-building theme at a macro level, *Dennis Jones* in his paper, “Shaping State Policy to Encourage Stewardship of Place,” begins with the premise that higher education is largely a state function, and that universities are “**potentially** one of the most important assets available to state governments as they seek to improve the life circumstances of their citizens.” In support of this assertion, he cites

evidence of the positive relationship between educational attainment, economic security, and overall health. But for universities to play their role in the process, he cites the need for stronger leadership, better understanding of their roles in the community and more assertiveness in advancing those roles, more substantive (as opposed to cosmetic) town and gown relationships, and more resources (both institutional and community). Understanding and to some degree influencing, if not shaping, the policy and political environment in which higher education seeks to accommodate to the impact in communities of the shifts in the economy is a key need.

With estimates that between 3 million and 15 million American jobs will be disappearing in the next 10-15 years, cities across America are looking to their universities to be principal allies and agents of change. *John Eger* in his paper, "Smart Communities, Universities, and Globalization: Educating the Workforce for Tomorrow's Economy," attempts to de-mystify the economic and employment uncertainties inherent in the transition from the postindustrial era to globalization. Colleges and universities are important players in communities that are looking to reinvent themselves for the knowledge economy and society. He notes the possibility of the emergence of a "Creative Age" in which America will thrive and prosper because of its traditions of tolerance for dissent, respect for individual enterprise, freedom of expression, and recognition that innovation, not mass production of low value goods and services, is the driving force for the American economy. Universities will be at the center of this creative process, *Eger* predicts.

The economic revolutions that are being created by technology are still in their infancies, even though electronic technologies have already made a vast difference in the way that many people work, shop, and pursue leisure time activities. As *Neal Grandjenett* and *Neal Topp* point out in their paper on "University Students of Tomorrow: Changing Experiences, Changing Expectations, Changing Brains," another important aspect of technology that is only now beginning to be recognized and explored by educators is how technology is changing the ways that students learn. Electronic technology has been facilitating distance learning as well as classroom presentation strategies for some time. However, educators are just beginning to get a glimmer of a suspicion that there is something radically different from past experiences in the ways that technology is affecting the way in which the current generation of students in higher education study and learn.

Changing learning styles and preferences of students will need to be recognized and integrated into classroom instructional strategies. In the field of teacher education, some faculty members are using a training-of-trainers model to prepare teachers to integrate technology into the classroom. *Nada Mach* and her colleagues presented a panel on "Preparing Teachers to Integrate Technology into Multicultural Inner-City Classrooms." Their model facilitates the collaborative efforts of teacher educators to produce technology-based lessons, implement them in their classes, and produce CD-ROMs that are case studies and tutorials for others. They share the lessons learned during their research process, including the need for an integrated approach (don't start with applications and avoid stand alone workshops); start with younger faculty and

integrate the process into their ongoing projects; and ensure sufficient support that includes provision of sufficient hardware and software.

Fund raising has become a more critical activity for universities in the era of shrinking resources, and has become more complex in the face of the uncertain economy besetting many communities. *Jamie Byrne* suggests an approach for building communities on campus and enhancing resources at the same time in “Forming a Culture of Giving: A Case Study in University Internal Fundraising.” This paper presents a strategy for a university campaign based on a model of creating relationships that has resulted in significant increases in employee giving over a three-year period.

In another innovative fund raising and community building strategy, presented in the paper, “Metropolitan Urban University Approach to Residential Learning Communities: Building Community One Building at a Time”, *Karen Whitney* shows how a creative building naming strategy led to the development of stronger learning communities and closer community ties through an approach that recognizes past campus heroes, and community leaders, and donors. The purpose of the “Building Names Project” is to build a sense of community between the residential student, the university, and the Indianapolis community. Private giving opportunities included a building naming opportunity at a level of \$250,000.

Community partnerships are integral elements of most university missions. Their value to the educational program and process are undergoing serious exploration in many institutions. In “Educating Citizens: Civic Engagement and the Urban Metropolitan University,” *Nancy Mary* and *Diane Podolske* share their exploration of what civic engagement means to faculty who use the term, what opportunities exist for students to become engaged in their communities, and how concepts of civic engagement relate to the values of various disciplines. They conclude that there is a need for further research to clarify faculty roles, the relationship of civic engagement to service learning, to define the value components of civic engagement and the place of advocacy, and the appropriateness of civic engagement to different disciplines.

*Aileen Hale* and *Kara Brascia* also look at faculty participation in service learning in their article, “Faculty Empowerment through Refined Service Learning.” They report on the lessons learned through their seminar “Revisioning Your Service Learning Course” which was developed to further knowledge of service learning concepts and increase skills in curricular integration, reflection, community partnerships, and assessment. They report on the institutional barriers experienced by faculty who incorporate service learning into their teaching, and suggest steps that could encourage more faculty to include service learning as an instructional strategy.

Forging closeness between university and community is also the focus in “Responding to Academic and Demographic Needs in the Metropolitan Market: A Case Study.” *Emily C. Richardson* recalls the process of designing a college unit within a university structure that is specifically geared to meet the needs of the metropolitan community,

with emphasis on the needs of senior citizens. The Academy for Learning in Retirement at Widener University was created by bringing in community members to participate in the design who worked with university staff to facilitate their intellectual and cultural development; foster social interaction, share interests and knowledge; serve as instructors, planners, and on the governance body.

## **Conclusion**

The 11th Annual International Conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities continued CUMU's tradition of professional meetings characterized by substantive exploration of issues that are vital to the future of higher education. Broadly based participation of colleagues from across the United States and internationally helped to provide the momentum necessary to ensure that attendees had the opportunity for the kind of dialogue that leads to collegially-inspired progress in addressing the common problems faced by educators. The differing perspectives and rich insights of experts and practitioners contributed to what participants agreed was a successful conference experience, made all the more pleasant and enjoyable by the cooperation of the Southern California climate and social environment.

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